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S E C R E T PRAGUE 000699

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH PARLIAMENT MAY INVESTIGATE ALLEGED RENDERING
FLIGHTS THROUGH CZECH REPUBLIC

Classified By: DCM Kenneth Hillas for Reasons 1.4 B+D

11. (SBU) Summary: Czech press in past week has picked up the story from the "New York Times" and other American press about CIA rendering flights that have allegedly transited the Czech Republic. Opposition politicians plan to call for a Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee hearing to discuss the flights and what knowledge Czech authorities had about them. End summary.

12. (SBU) Beginning May 5, Czech dailies, citing information published in the "New York Times," reported that at least one CIA-operated flight rendering terrorism suspects to Uzbekistan landed in the Czech Republic. Czech aviation officials subsequently confirmed that a flight bound for Tashkent departed an airport in the Czech Republic on 21 September 2003. Other reports quote airport workers who state that the Boeing jet in question has been seen at least twice at Prague's Ruzyně airport.

13. (U) Czech officials have stated that they have no knowledge of any such flights. Interior Minister Frantisek Bublan stated on May 8 that he "inquired whether the Czech Republic is involved and I know that we are not." He added that during the 2003 flight in question no passengers entered or left the plane, and therefore Czech authorities had no requirement to seek information about the passengers.

14. (U) Opposition politicians and left-leaning critics within the ruling Social Democratic Party have said that they intend to hold Parliamentary hearings on the flights. Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Vladimir Lastuvka and Vice Chair Jan Kavan (Social Democratic Party) said they intend to seek formal answers from the Foreign Affairs and Defense Ministers, as well as heads of the Czech intelligence services, about the flights. Committee Vice Chairman Vaclav Exner (Communist Party) has said deputies may use the general question time to also seek more information from the government.

15. (S) Czech intelligence agency officials have said they are not interested in pursuing the matter and view opposition calls for hearings as "pure politics." They have voiced no complaints about the matter.

16. (C) Other than discussions with intelligence services, post has not received any formal inquiries from the GOCR about the case. In response to the few press inquiries we received, Embassy has stated that we are not in a position to comment on these reports. However, it is possible that parliamentary hearings could prompt a direct approach from the Foreign Affairs Committee or the Government itself. It is also possible that Prime Minister Paroubek will raise the issue during Ambassador's initial call on him, likely to take place in the week following the May 13 vote of confidence.

17. (C) For now, this issue does not appear to have the potential to significantly impact U.S.-Czech relations. The Embassy will, therefore, continue to use the same response for inquiries from the Czech Government as has been used with the media, unless otherwise instructed.

HILLAS